

I am very concerned by the current moves to allow expanded ownership of media. I do appreciate that the rules governing such ownership are ancient by modern technological standards, but the need for diversity of voices in local markets has not changed. Corporations as a rule act in their own financial best interests, and those interest do not include airing opinions and investigative reports which the stockholders and management fear would cause short term harm to stock values, personal prestige, and corporate reputation.

Although my political views are not currently aligned with much of what I hear, I still thank the stars that we have a few meager channels of discontent, such as NPR, PBS, and Pacifica. I would like to see greater requirements for public affairs programming. For those who would counter with the argument that we don't need such requirements because CSPAN and other satellite/cable channels provide such programming, I point to the fact that many people cannot afford the cost of satellite/cable. But more important than that, the license-holders of "free" broadcast channels are already charged with using those licenses in the public interest.

As for the question of how the public interest should be determined, I believe we need more than just a ratings system for this. The vibrance of our political system and the need for accountability of corporations and politicians both require that the public sometimes hear that which we do not particularly want to hear. Yes, some may turn it off or tune it out, but surely this is better than having a self-interested corporation edit it out so that noone hears.

The new media may change the nature of the competitive landscape for broadcast stations, but the public interest requirement is more important than stations' profitability. Those who are so concerned with achieving the profit of mass media outlet ownership should seek their fortunes elsewhere.